



A Tap on the Shoulder

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, April 11, 2011

The citywide Community Budget meetings started last week with the city manager and other city department heads in attendance to answer questions. Ten public meetings will be held with one meeting in each Council district.

This first meeting was held in District 2 with approximately 100 people in attendance. From my perspective of recognizing faces, listening to questions and subsequent applause, approximately 80 percent of those in attendance were city employees. The high ratio of employees is understandable, since most employees would attend a meeting if their employer was discussing layoffs.

Government has a much softer and proactive approach to layoffs than the private sector. For example, I was laid off twice myself due to market downturns and in both cases I did not have advanced notification that I would be let go. Instead, I, like many, got a tap on the shoulder from HR and a two-week severance check. Although it is stressful to know that layoffs are looming, at least one can plan accordingly rather than having the HR shoulder-tap, which, unfortunately happens often in private sector.

The mayor spoke at the meeting and answered questions from the audience. After he finished, Ed Shikada, our assistant city manager, walked through a presentation of the budget deficit and some of the alternative cuts that might be selected by the city manager in arriving at a balanced budget. The presentation was followed by Q and A. This week there will be meetings in District 5 and 7.

There was a survey card that was distributed at the end of the meeting that asked a few questions. I put the five questions on the internet for you to answer in case you are unable to attend the nine remaining meetings: [2011 San Jose citywide Community Budget meetings](#).

Also, last week San Jose welcomed a new clean tech company to North San Jose. Wrightspeed Inc., designs digital drive systems to replace conventional power trains for commercial vehicles. Trucks that

have Wrightspeed drive systems installed do not consume as much fuel, providing cost savings to the vehicle fleet. California spends \$150 million a day on fuel, placing the state in third place globally for consumption of fuel, behind the United States as a whole and China.

Why would Wrightspeed, which started in Burlingame, move its 20-plus employees, mostly engineers, to San Jose? The company moved to San Jose because of our Office of Economic Development. Wrightspeed was part of the Clean Tech Open that the City of San Jose sponsored (marketing). A connection was made by staff at the event (sales), who kept in touch with Wrightspeed.

When it came to looking for a new building, our staff facilitated a search and found a building within our Enterprise Zone which makes Wrightspeed eligible for state tax credits on hiring new employees. (Gov. Brown has proposed eliminating Enterprise Zones). In addition, San Jose has a foreign trade zone which allows Wrightspeed to import sub assemblies from Europe without tariffs, to put into their end product. Wrightspeed will also generate sales tax for the city of San Jose since they sell a physical object.

It is important to always be focused on growing our economic pie but it does not always happen if a city does not have a sales team.

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